



THE MEDICAL DURABLE POWER OF ATTORNEY

Your spokesperson in a medical emergency has many possible names:
MDPOA, Medical Durable Power of Attorney, Medical Power of Attorney, Medical Proxy,
Healthcare Proxy, Healthcare Agent, Medical Decision Maker, Medical Surrogate...

Choosing a medical spokesperson is one of the most important decisions you make in Advance Care Planning. At least 50% of us have a time when we can't speak for ourselves in an emergency.

Perhaps you are on a medication for pain and aren't alert for more than a few seconds. Or you might have a Mental Health crisis and can't make your own decisions. Perhaps you are unconscious from an accident, or you have cognitive problems that keep you from making good decisions. These are all possibilities. For this you need an MDPOA you can trust.

Who to Choose: This is not an honor. It is a job for the best candidate.

Your MDPOA must be at least 18 and cannot be your medical provider.

Your MDPOA should not have cognitive difficulties.

Your MDPOA may need to make tough decisions and ask tough questions.

Your MDPOA should understand and honor your values about life and death.

Your MDPOA must stand up for your wishes in spite of difficult doctors, family or friends.

Your MDPOA should live close by if possible or be able to come to be with you.

In COLORADO there is no default MDPOA for an adult. If no MDPOA is chosen and decisions need to be made, it is a difficult and time consuming process for a proxy to be chosen.

Visualize your MDPOA- an exercise you might want to try!

Close your eyes. Picture yourself on a life raft in the middle of a choppy ocean. You are alone and the sky is dark and ominous. There is no shoreline visible in any direction. There is only a seagull keeping you company. You know that your family is paying for a search of this massive ocean. You have no food or water. Who would you choose to decide when to call off the search? That person might just be your MDPOA!

The Job Description:

"...my agent has the power to consent to, refuse, or stop any healthcare, treatment service or diagnostic procedure. My agent also has the authority to talk with healthcare personnel, get information and sign forms as necessary to carry out these decisions." This includes withdrawal of CPR.

•Your MDPOA has the legal authority to make medical decisions if you cannot make them. You make all of your own decisions as long as you are able to.

•The MDPOA should make decisions that they believe are the ones you would choose if you were able. This means that you *must* have conversations right now so that you are on the same page about your values about quality and quantity of life.

•The MDPOA can read your chart, talk to your physician, ask for tests or second opinions, or ask for anything you would, if you were able to do so.

•The MDPOA may have to make some very difficult decisions about life support, hospice, nursing home placement, surgery, dialysis and other tough choices. You can never predict all of the possibilities.

Your Responsibilities:

Choose one Medical Power of Attorney and two alternates. Why? You and your MDPOA might be in the same accident, and unable able to act as one another's agents, therefore back up agents are necessary.

This is not a committee. Anyone and everyone can weigh in, but the individual chosen as MDPOA is the one upon whom the final decision rests. Choose a strong MDPOA; or at least arm that person with information in writing or audio or video. If you have concerns that it will be hard for decisions to be made or there will be family discord, personal documentation of wishes- an audio, video or letter is a good thing.

You'll never be able to think about all of the possibilities that might arise. What is important is thinking through what's important to you. Three major areas to consider are: Pain, Quantity of life, and Quality of life. Here are a few statements I have heard:

I would rather have moderate pain and be alert enough to know my family.

or

I want to be pain free even if I am totally sedated.

I want to live as long as possible no matter what.

or

I don't want to be kept alive if I cannot do anything for myself.

If all of my good days are behind me, don't prolong my life. Let me go naturally.

or

Quantity of life is important to me. I want to be around to know my grand children and their grandchildren if I can. I will go on any trial drug that comes along. I am ok with being in a nursing home.

TheConversationProject.org offers great thought questions and pointers about having difficult conversations, and thinking through possibilities.

Changing the MDPOA Appointment:

You can change the MDPOA at any time. There can be many good reasons to update or change your designated MDPOA or Alternates.

If there is reason to make a change, do so ASAP. Destroy old documents, and prepare and date new ones. Let the agents know of the change. Use the Letter to my Agents format to be sure all bases are covered

Decide • Document • Discuss

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